



## Recent Developments and Experiences – SIAF, Finland

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### **Recent developments :**

Most COVID restrictions have been lifted in Finland. Within Finland, the competent regional authorities in each region decide on restrictions/recommendation in line with the Communicable Diseases Act and dependent on regional situations.

One case of monkey pox has been confirmed in Finland for now.

The Government of Finland has asked SIAF to develop a hybrid work strategy as a part of the overall governmental hybrid work strategy i.e. balance between telework and office work. According to a poll, over 80 percent of SIAF staff wish to continue working remotely. We have not set limits with regard to the number of days of telework or non-telework. However, staff needs to be able to work from where they are and possibly travel to an accident site in a reasonable time frame. Telework from overseas is permitted on a case-by-case basis and the issue of reaching the office when needed also addressed on a case-by case basis.

### **Organisation change in 2021**

SIAF started a new health- and social care investigative branch in 2021. A new chief investigator started working in June 2021. The first investigation has been completed and the investigation report will be published on May 31, 2022.

Due to budgetary issues (overall governmental budget) resulting from the COVID crisis and most possibly in the future the war in Ukraine to some degree, we have not been able to hire a special investigator for the branch as of yet - as was the plan. For now, this new hire is planned for 2024.

SIAF transferred its on-call duty to the Emergency Response Center (directorate) in 2021. This was done to improve the information security and service quality of the notifications we receive. We have not transferred any of our powers or competences as such, but have rather streamlined and improved the quality of our on-call duty system. The results have been very good and encouraging. The Emergency Response Center also handles the on-call duty for the Ministry for Foreign Affairs for example – in addition to the overall 112 activity.



### **Staff changes in 2021**

Our long-standing Executive Director Dr. Veli-Pekka Nurmi resigned and transferred to the private sector as of 1 January 2022 and Mr. Kurt Kokko took office in February 2022 upon his nominations by the government. The appointment is not limited in time.

Dr. Hannamari Helke will transfer to the Finnish Transport and Communications Agency (Traficom) as of 15 June 2022 – after over eight years of service at SIAF. She will, however, participate in the upcoming ITSA meeting.

As mentioned above, one additional chief investigator was hired in 2021. The current permanent staff is at 17 civil servants and over 120 external experts. En vue the new investigation branch, new experts have been trained for that branch and added to the roster. As a matter of proportion, 66 out of these approximately 120 were involved in investigations in 2021 – thus 50%.

### **Budget**

No budgetary cuts for SIAF in 2021.

### **Investigation activity 2021**

It is to be noted that out of the 13 investigations started in 2021 almost 50% were started in the last quartal of the year.

The table below will shed some light on the activity and the possible changes in investigation activity:

|  | <b>2019</b> | <b>2020</b> | <b>2021</b> |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Investigations started</b>                      | 12          | 9           | 13          |
| <b>Investigations completed</b>                    | 15          | 10          | 10          |
| <b>Preliminary Investigation Reports published</b> | 4           | 6           | 5           |
| <b>Accreps appointed</b>                           | 2           | 2           | 3           |

Overall, there was a drop in 2020, but we are back in the median.

A couple of interesting points from the overall investigative activity:



- SIAF published a special investigation report on the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in June 2021. In a way this was an “audit” of the government measures during the first wave of the pandemic with 12 recommendations related to crisis leadership, information flow and preparedness. The report has been extremely well received and recommendations are being implemented.
- SIAF is conducting a thematic investigation on accidental drownings. The follow-up period was the entire year 2021. This is still an issue in a country like ours with thousands of lakes. Altogether 165 accidental drownings were noted. The report will be published in June 2022. Unfortunately age, habits (usage of lifeweats and alcohol consumption for example) and heart and coronary diseases tend to play a major role.

### **Communication :**

The new European accessibility directive has been adopted in Finland and this caused some additional ground work for communications with the adoption of the guidelines and the overhaul of our website for example. This work will continue. Translation issues continue to be of importance as Finland has two official languages and the language legislation rather cumbersome.

### **Miscellaneous:**

The on-going war in Ukraine has affected Finland – and obviously it is hard to say to what extent this will continue. While commercial traffic – whether it is air, railway, sea or other – has decreased considerably, there is still military traffic and trainings on-going. A technical arrangement has been drawn up between Finland and NATO where procedures have been agreed for military exercises between NATO and Finland when executed on Finnish soil. The agreement also includes procedures for accident/incident reporting and investigation.

The Baltic Sea will continue to play a crucial role geopolitically as will the Arctic. Finland also has a considerable border with Russia. SIAF will have to address the issue of joint accidents with Russia at some point, but obviously right now is not the time. The Government has guided us to avoid contacts with Russians.

Due to the geopolitical situation cyber issues play an increasing role in any matters. SIAF actively engages in these discussions not only for our work purposes, but there could easily be an investigation (special or other) that we would eventually conduct on cyber disturbance.

And obviously, we look forward to seeing you in Helsinki for the ITSA 2022 conference!